



# CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

## Historic District Landmarks Commission

### Guidelines for Porches, Galleries and Balconies



#### PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES

The rich architectural character of New Orleans is distinguished by its collection of porches, galleries and balconies. Porches, galleries and balconies are typically one of the most visible elements of a building; they are key elements in determining its style, and play a significant role in its appearance and that of the streetscape.

Historically, porches, galleries and balconies were an outside room where property owners could find a sheltered transition into their buildings, exterior living space, a place to meet and converse with neighbors and welcome visitors. Their overhangs also protect windows and doors below from direct sun and rain, allowing them to remain open during a rain shower.

**All applicants must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) as well as all necessary permits prior to proceeding with any work.** Please review this information during the early stages of planning your project. Familiarity with this material can assist in moving a project quickly through the approval process, saving applicants both time and money. Staff review of all details is required to ensure proposed work is appropriate to the specific property.

Additional *Guidelines* addressing other historic building topics are available at the HDLC office and on its web site at [www.nola.gov](http://www.nola.gov). For more information, to clarify whether a proposed project requires Historic District Landmarks Commission (HDLC) review, to obtain property ratings or permit applications, please call the HDLC at (504) 658-7040.

#### SECTION INDEX

The HDLC reviews all alterations to and replacement of porches, galleries and balconies. This section includes:

- Types of Porches, Galleries and Balconies – Page 09-2
- Porch Components, Materials and Checklist – Page 09-4
- Components of Wood Porches, Galleries and Balconies – Page 09-5
- Balustrades – Page 09-7
- Ornamental Metals – Page 09-8
- New Metal Galleries and Balconies – Page 09-9
- Lighting, Security Cameras, Ceiling Fans – Page 09-10
- Porch, Gallery and Balcony Guide – Page 09-11
- Enclosing Porches, Galleries and Balconies – Page 09-12

#### USING THESE GUIDELINES

The first step in using these *Guidelines* is to understand the rating. The rating corresponds to the historical and/or architectural significance of properties and determines what will be permitted within local Historic Districts or at local Landmarks under the jurisdiction of the HDLC.

- S** *Significant Properties – Retain the highest degree of architectural and historical merit.*
- C** *Contributing Properties – Contribute to the overall District and city character.*
- N** *Non-Contributing Properties – Do not contribute to the overall District character.*

## TYPES OF PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES

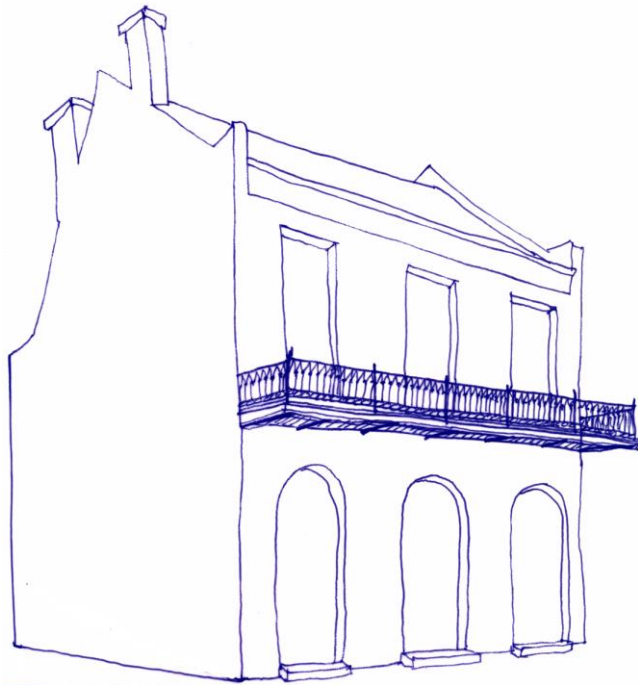
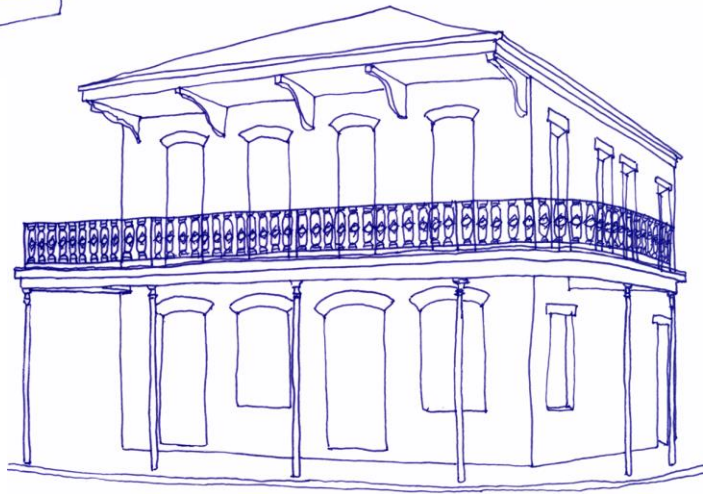


### Porch

*A porch is an exterior space attached to a residence at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor level, and is typically the full width of the façade and includes a roof.*

### Gallery

*Where buildings are constructed at the property lot lines, galleries extend over the sidewalk and are supported by posts or columns at the curb.*



### Balcony

*Balconies project from the face of the building, generally 3 to 4 feet, and typically do not include a roof structure above.*

### Double Gallery

*Double gallery houses are 2-stories, with galleries across the façade at both levels, supported by columns or posts. In many cases, galleries are protected by an extension of the main building's roof.*

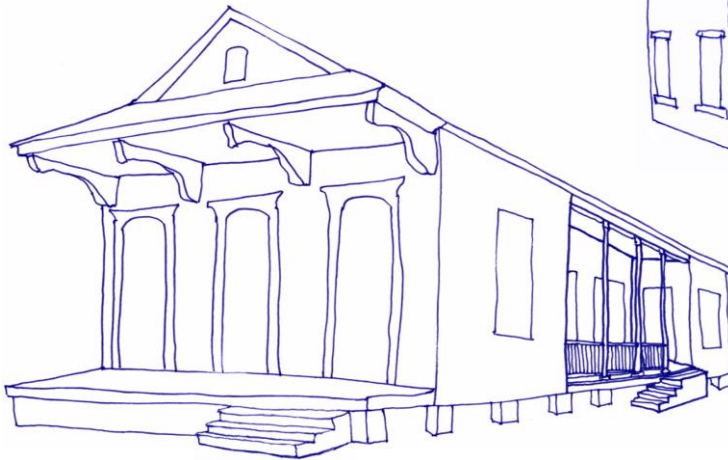




## SECONDARY FAÇADE PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES

### Service Wing Balcony

*A balcony can act as an outdoor corridor, particularly in a townhouse, connecting the rooms of the main house to the smaller service wing rooms.*



### Side Gallery

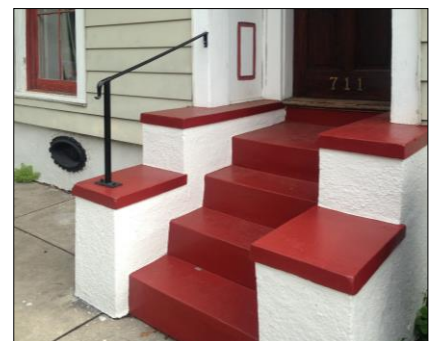
*A side gallery is a narrow covered side porch that acts as an exterior corridor.*

## STOOPS

Steps that lead directly to the entrance without a landing or porch are known as stoops. They can be wood, brick or concrete. Drainage holes are recommended at the base of stoops and steps, particularly wood, to allow drainage and ventilation.

### RETAINING HISTORIC STOOPS OR STEPS

At double residences converted to single family homes, such as shotguns, the HDLC requires that both sets of stoops or stairs be retained.







## PORCH COMPONENTS, MATERIALS AND CHECKLIST

- Roof** – Generally same material as main roof, can be metal if low pitch – Verify roofing material is secure, flashing is intact, and there is no ponding
- Gutter and downspout** – Verify they are secure; clear leaves and other debris
- Molding** – Typically wood – Verify paint surface is intact, especially behind gutters
- Lintel** – Typically wood – Verify paint surface is intact, especially behind and below gutters
- Frieze** – Typically ornate wood – Verify paint surface is intact
- Brackets** – Typically ornate wood – Verify paint surface is intact
- Porch ceiling** – Typically tongue and groove wood – Check for peeling paint that could indicate dampness and a possible roofing or flashing problem
- Post** (Column if round) – Typically wood – Check base for rot and that paint surface is intact
- Balustrade**: Typically wood top rail, bottom rail, balusters – Verify elements are secure and that paint film is intact
- Porch floor** – Typically tongue and groove wood – Verify floor is sloped to drain water away from the building
- Apron** – Typically wood – Check substructure for water or insect damage
- Porch steps** – Wood, concrete or brick – Check wood for rot, termite damage and intact paint surface

## MAINTAINING PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES

Due to the importance porches, galleries and balconies play in the perception of historic buildings and streetscapes, original materials and details should be preserved. Typically, areas covered by a porch, gallery or balcony roof, including windows, doors and wall surfaces, tend to require less maintenance; however, steps, railings, and roofs are usually exposed to the weather and might require additional maintenance. One of the best ways to preserve wood features is regular painting. If a component is deteriorating, repair or replacement in kind is recommended as part of the regular maintenance.

Similar to wood elements, ornamental metals also require regular maintenance. Both wrought iron and cast iron are highly prone to rusting. When iron elements rust, there are two significant issues. The first relates to their dimensions, primarily thickness, which can increase from 7 to 10 times their original size. When embedded in a building assembly, the rust expansion results in cracking which affects the building's structural integrity. The second issue relates to the loss of structural integrity of the metal component itself. One of the best ways to protect ornamental metals is to regularly remove surface rust and repaint using a rust inhibitive paint.

(Refer to appropriate *Guidelines* sections for additional information to address specific components.)



## COMPONENTS OF WOOD PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES

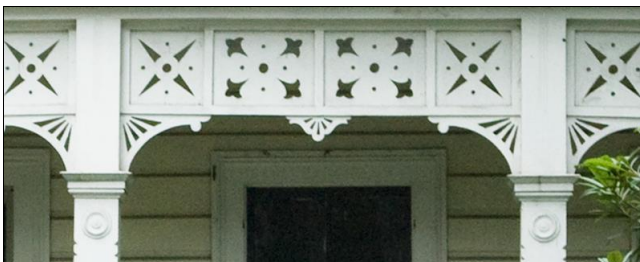
Wood porches, galleries and balconies are made up of a number of components. These components all work together to achieve an integrated and unified visual, architectural and structural purpose that is characteristic of a building's type and style. It is important to note that all porches, galleries and balconies do not have all components.



**Roofing:** Roofs are present in porches, and may or may not be included in balconies and galleries. A roof shelters the area below from the sun and rain, and protects the windows and doors from the elements. A roof's material is generally dependent on its slope. At more steeply pitched roofs, such as those found at shotgun residences, the porch roof material would likely be a continuation of the main roof material, such as slate or asphalt shingles. At galleries where the roof is relatively flat, flat seam metal roofing, built-up roofing and modified bitumen roofing might be present. (Refer to *Guidelines for Roofing* for more information.)

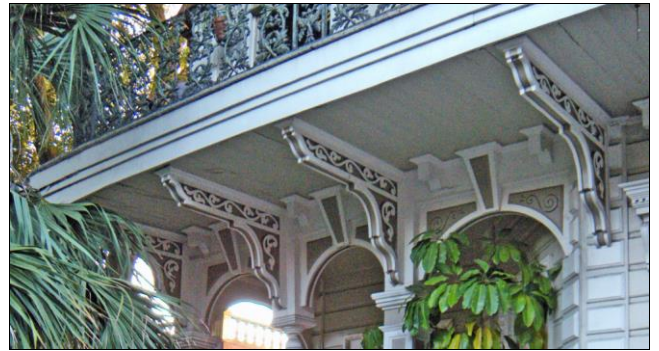


**Lintels:** Lintels are the horizontal elements between piers or columns and typically provide structural and visual support for the roof or wall surface above.

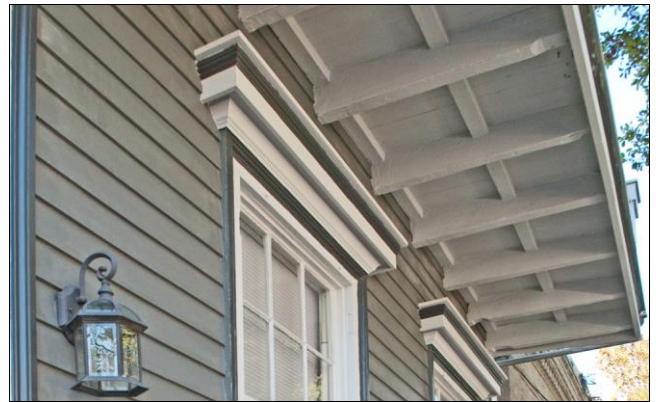


**Wood Ornament:** Decorative wood elements, such as friezes, fretwork and brackets provide visual interest and are specific to a building's style and period of construction.

**Brackets:** Brackets can be decorative and used to support balconies or roof overhangs that project from a building's wall surface. Brackets should typically extend to the outside edge of the balcony or overhang.



**Ceiling:** Porch ceilings are most typically made of tongue and groove boards, but can be highly decorative. By contrast, at the underside of balconies and galleries, the exposed structure and the bottom of the flooring of the level above are typically visible.



*The structure and underside of the balcony flooring is visible when looking up from the sidewalk.*

**Flooring:** Historically, flooring was typically tongue and groove boards. More elaborate homes might include marble or other materials. More recently, property owners have begun replacing their tongue and groove flooring with concrete, which is not appropriate.



*The protective paint layer has worn off of the tongue and groove flooring and it is beginning to expand and bulge. Regular repainting will protect the wood postponing the need for replacement.*





**Privacy Screens:** Privacy screens, which visually separate adjoining residences, such as double shotguns, are typically wood, often with a curved top.

## COLUMNS AND POSTS

Posts and columns are vertical structural supporting members. Columns are round and posts are square or rectangular.



*Classical Column*



*Greek Revival Post  
Rectangular, Not Square*



*Turned Gallery Post*



*Chamfered Post  
With Brackets*



*Modern Metal Post  
Not Permitted*

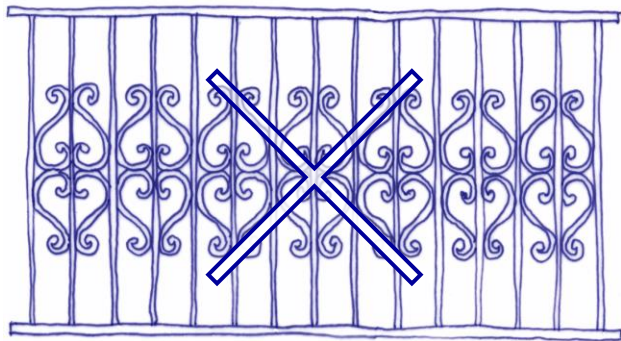


**Steps:** Steps can be made of a variety of materials including wood, brick and concrete. In most instances, wood steps, sometime flanked by plinths or with a railing to match the porch railing, are most appropriate.

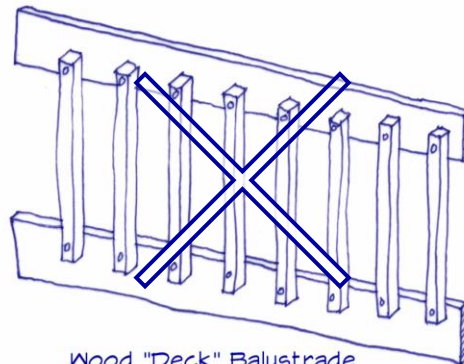


**Chain walls and piers:** A chain wall is a continuous wall under the front edge of the porch that typically includes a vent. A pier is a rectangular support that typically sits directly under a porch or column. Chain walls and piers are most typically brick with a protective stucco coating.





Metal Balustrade With Applied Decorative Elements

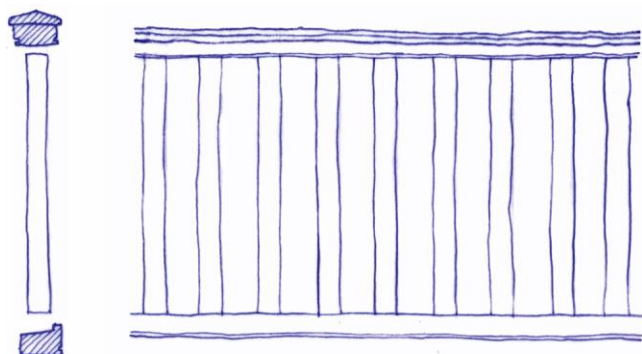


Wood "Deck" Balustrade

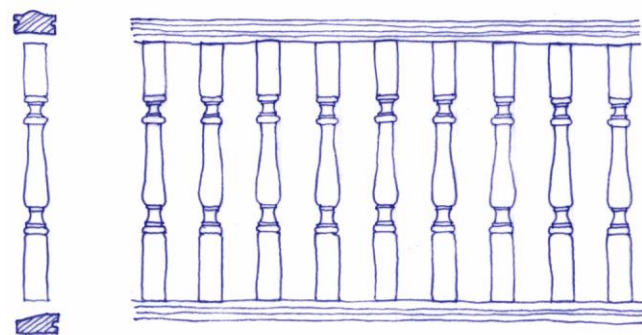
The HDLC does not approve applied decorative scrolled metal ornament and wood "deck" balustrades. An alternative is a stylistically appropriate wood balustrade. (See below)

## BALUSTRADES

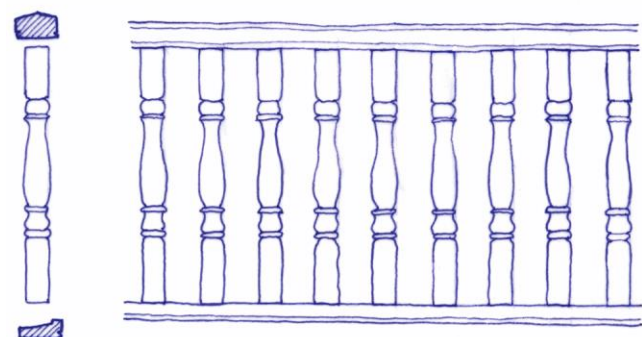
A balustrade is a railing with upper and lower horizontal members, known as rails, with vertical balusters of wood or metal. Replacement balustrades should match the overall style and character of the building.



Square Post Balustrade



Victorian Turned Balustrade



Classical Turned Balustrade



A higher secondary safety rail has been installed behind the cast iron balustrade to meet code requirements.

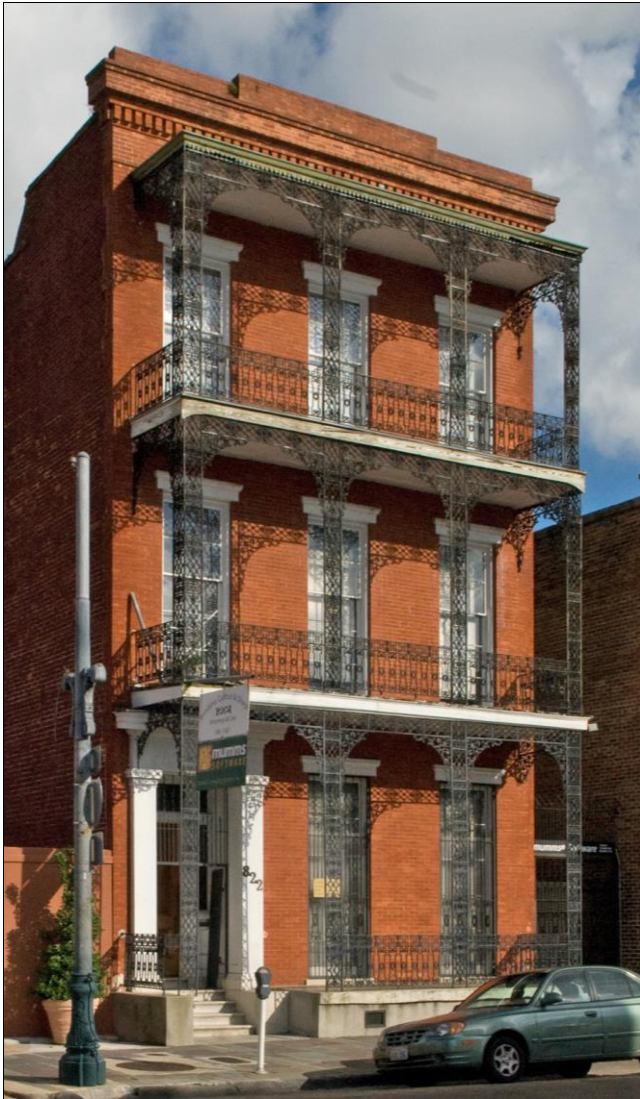


This service wing balcony includes a wood lattice privacy screen above the balustrade.



Turned wood balustrades are appropriate for most Italianate, Queen Anne and Eastlake homes. Historic balusters tend to be wider than many new, mass produced balusters.





*This triple gallery has delicate and ornate cast iron railings, posts and lintels. Note the vent opening at the chain wall.*

## ORNAMENTAL METALS

Ornamental metals, including wrought iron and cast iron, are used for both structural and ornamental purposes. Wrought iron, is hand made by heating, beating and stretching iron into decorative hardware and ironwork, and was common into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cast iron, formed by casting iron in foundry molds, was popularized in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. Casting allowed the fabrication of more elaborate and larger elements such as columns, and produced standardized decorative components like scrollwork and filigree. Components could be ordered from a catalogue, and for larger and more complex installations, individual pieces were often fastened together.

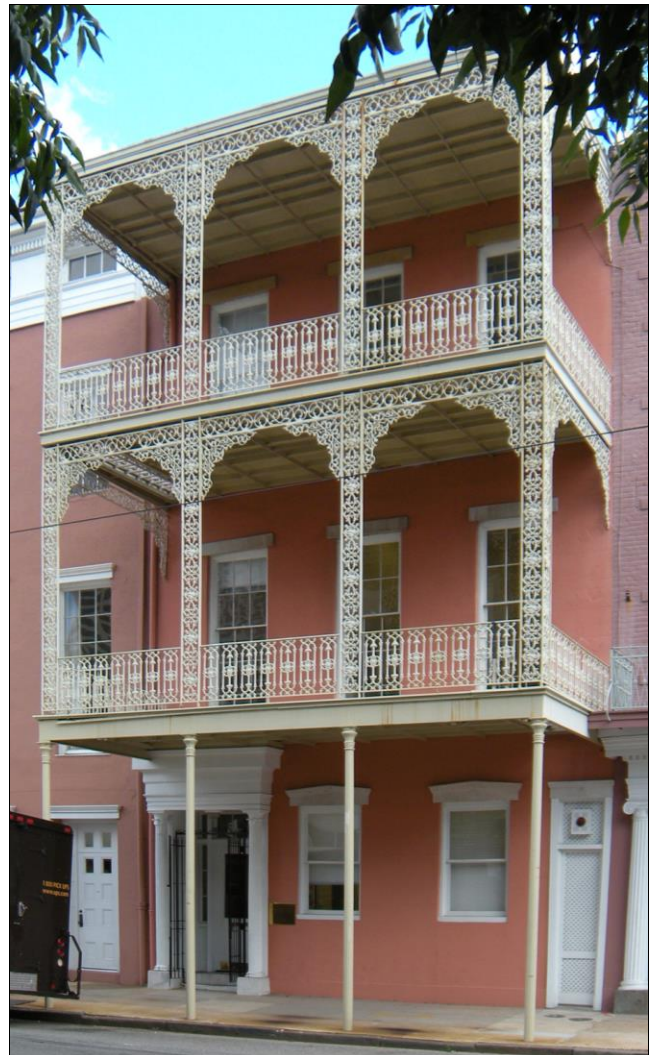
The use of wrought or cast iron details including handrails, cornice components, columns, brackets, balusters, etc. is typically associated with specific architectural styles and periods. It was also common for older buildings to be retrofitted with ornamental cast iron at a later date.

**Balcony supports:** Balconies project out from the face of the building and are generally supported by metal outriggers or brackets, which can be decorative.



*Metal outriggers are located under the balcony and provide support.*

**Posts:** At the ground level, gallery posts tend to be fairly simple, but can become more decorative and ornate at upper floors.



*At the street level, the supporting posts are simple. At the upper floors they become more ornate and are combined with brackets and railings.*



**Railings:** Ornate metal railings are generally cast iron while the simpler picket style railings are typically wrought iron.



*Cast iron decorative railings typically include a repetitive pattern of detailed components.*

### **ADDING OR REMOVING ORNAMENTAL METALS**

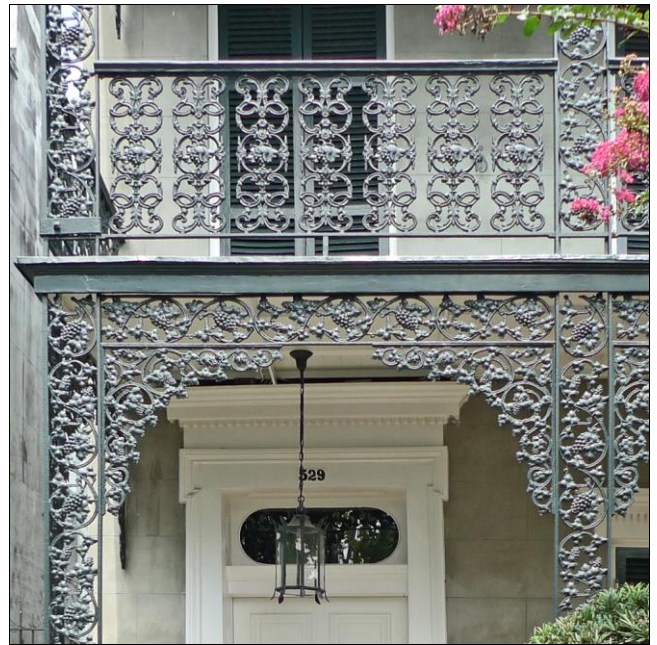
The HDLC does not approve the addition of ornamental wrought or cast iron where it is not documented for the particular style or type of building. The HDLC does not approval the removal of contributing ornamental metals.

### **NEW METAL GALLERIES AND BALCONIES**

New galleries and balconies can greatly alter the appearance of a building. In select cases the HDLC might permit the installation of new galleries and balconies provided that:

- The building is not rated as Significant by the HDLC
- The installation does not destroy or conceal important architectural features or details
- The proposed design is compatible in size, scale and design to the building and surrounding streetscape

Refer to *Guidelines for New Construction, Additions and Demolition* for information regarding the installation of a new porch, gallery or balcony.



*The ornamental metals at this gallery have a motif of grapes and vines. They can be found in the vertical and horizontal supports, brackets and railings.*

When installing new galleries or balconies, great care should be taken to minimize the removal of existing building fabric in its installation, as well as attachment. In addition, the design of the components should be simple and visually minimized, to allow the wall surfaces beyond to remain visible.

When installing new galleries, simple posts located along the curb as would be typically found in historic galleries are generally most appropriate, with a minimal picket or similar railing above.



*This balcony appears to "float" in front of the window and is fastened to the wall at the platform level.*



## LIGHTING

The type and placement of lighting plays an important role in maintaining the authentic historic character of a building. When modifying or installing lighting, there must be a balance between providing sufficient lighting to provide a secure feeling and fitting within a neighborhood and streetscape context. At residential buildings, exterior lighting is typically located at porches and galleries. At times there might be additional security lighting on the side and rear elevations of a building. (Refer to *Guidelines for Commercial Buildings* for lighting at commercial, institutional and large-scale residential locations.)

All lighting should be installed in a manner that only illuminates the porch, gallery and walkway surfaces without lighting spillover onto adjacent properties or into the night sky. In addition, the color and quality of the proposed light should mimic the soft, warm tone of incandescent lamps. **Exposed conduit, wiring or junction boxes are not permitted.**

When possible, the HDLC encourages the use of original light fixtures adapted for contemporary use, such as increasing brightness with new or additional bulbs. **Fluorescent tube lighting and flood lights are not permitted at street elevations.** Where the building no longer has original exterior lights or never had them, the HDLC encourages light fixtures that are compatible in age, style and scale to the building, or which are unobtrusive and not suggestive of a style or age. In addition, the HDLC requires that lighting be maintained and burned-out bulbs be replaced.

## LIGHTING TYPES

**Decorative Lighting** generally draws attention to the fixture or design rather than providing significant illumination. It represents the only type of lighting that should be highly visible at a façade. Types of residential decorative lighting in New Orleans include gas lamps, hanging lamps, wall sconces and seasonal lighting such as Christmas lights.

When a decorative lamp is illuminated, it becomes highly visible and attracts attention. Therefore, it should be compatible with the building. In most instances, the number of decorative lights should be limited, and located near the primary entrance. They should be installed in a manner that minimizes damage to historic building fabric; and evenly spaced on porch or gallery bays, or centered on or around an element such as a door. They should be scaled appropriately for the proposed location. Faux historic materials, such as varnished, polished brass, are not appropriate.

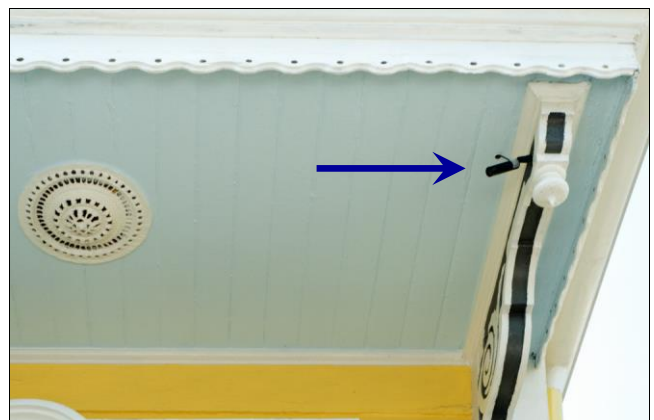
Any traditionally temporary lights, such as seasonal Christmas lights or decorative light displays, shall be installed for no longer than 90 days. If they will be installed for longer than 90 days they are subject to HDLC review and approval.



*The decorative porch lamp is centered over the door and appropriately scaled and designed for the building.*

**Ambient Lighting** provides a wash of general illumination on a porch or gallery. Since the emphasis of ambient lighting is the illumination rather than the fixture, all ambient lights should be small, unobtrusive and as discreetly installed as possible. Examples of unobtrusive lights include recessed lighting at a porch or gallery ceiling, or lights shining through soffit vents.

**Security Lighting** should be located as discreetly as possible, and located at rear or non-street elevations. The number of security lights should be limited, and they should be activated by motion sensors whenever possible.



*This security camera is very small and located inside the bracket to minimize its visibility.*

## SECURITY CAMERAS

Cameras can provide additional security. Cameras should be limited in number and size. They should be installed as unobtrusively as possible. Similar to lighting, exposed conduit, wiring or junction boxes are not permitted.

## CEILING FANS

Ceiling fans should be as simple as possible, with a style that complements the building. They should be limited in number, evenly spaced, typically centered on bays and mounted on short poles.

**The installation of ceiling fans with integral lighting is not permitted. The installation of ceiling fans underneath balconies, canopies or galleries over ground level sidewalks is prohibited.**



## PORCH, GALLERY AND BALCONY GUIDE

### **THE HDLC REQUIRES:**

- Designs in keeping with the building's style including proportion and detailing of elements such as cornices, posts, columns, fretwork and balustrades (Refer to the *Guidelines for Building Types and Architectural Styles*)

### **THE HDLC PERMITS:**

- Replacement of deteriorated ornamental metals and decorative wood elements with another material, if the dimensions, profiles and detailing match the historic component exactly; and when the finish is applied to the substitute material, it matches the original texture exactly

### **THE HDLC RECOMMENDS:**

- Replacement of only those parts or components which cannot be repaired – such as repairing a column base rather than replacing the entire column
- Reconstruction of removed porches, galleries or balconies that are compatible in size and scale to the buildings and streetscape on which it is being proposed
- Replacement of only missing or deteriorated materials in-kind to match the material, dimensions, size, profile and details and other visual characteristics of the historic condition
- Custom replication of individual deteriorated components, such as balusters
- Aligning new steps with the front entrance
- Aligning heights of new porches, galleries and balconies within a few inches of interior floor and ceiling heights
- Installing a 2'-0" to 3'-0" high stucco chain wall with vents at the front elevation and piers at the side elevations of porches and raised galleries
- Incorporating lighting and security needs into design if required (Refer to *Page 09-10*)

### **THE HDLC DISCOURAGES:**

- Introducing new materials that were not historically a part of the porch, gallery or balcony

### **THE HDLC DOES NOT PERMIT:**

- **New porches, galleries or balconies at street elevations on Significant buildings where they did not exist previously or where they are historically inappropriate such as at warehouse buildings**
- Replacement of wood tongue and groove flooring with an alternate material
- Replacement of wood steps with concrete or brick
- Replacement of wood railings and posts with iron or a synthetic material without historic documentation
- New porches, galleries or balconies that destroy or conceal important architectural features or details
- Decks that are visible from the public right-of-way

### **SUBMISSION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

The HDLC requires the submission of dimensioned drawings of all components and details of proposed porches, balconies and galleries for review and approval prior to any installation or modification.

### **NEW PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES**

Refer to *Guidelines for New Construction, Additions and Demolition* for information regarding the installation of a new porch, gallery or balcony.

### **APPROPRIATE MATERIALS**

- Wood framed buildings have a wood porch or gallery if it is a residential building, and might have a metal gallery if it is commercial
- Masonry buildings typically have a metal gallery or balcony

### **SALVAGED COMPONENTS**

To find the best quality replacement woodwork or ornamental metal, a good place to start might be an architectural salvage store. Due to the quality of the wood historically used in New Orleans' buildings, salvaged and repaired woodwork will often outlast new replacement woodwork. Similar to when installing new replacement woodwork or ornamental metal, take care with salvaged materials to match the size, shape, type, profiles and detailing of existing historic component. Just because it is old does not mean it is appropriate.

### **LEASED AIR RIGHTS**

All exterior building components such as stairs, ramps, galleries and balconies that project into or over public sidewalks or right-of-ways are required to lease air rights for these encroachments from the City of New Orleans. Contact the Department of Property Management, Office of Real Estate and Records for additional information.

### **ACCESSIBLE RAMPS**

Refer to *Guidelines for Commercial Buildings, Page 11-19* for information regarding the installation of accessible ramps and lifts.

### **BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENTS**

Although select deteriorated components of porches, galleries and balconies can be replaced in kind, the new construction and in some instance significant replacement of these features must meet the requirements of the current building codes.

Areas typically affected are the heights of the railings and balustrades; as well as stair tread and riser dimensions. Contact the Office of Safety and Permits or the HDLC for additional information.





*This side gallery has been enclosed with a glazed wall. The HDLC prohibits the enclosure of galleries and porches.*

## ENCLOSING PORCHES, GALLERIES AND BALCONIES

Porches, galleries and balconies were meant to be open exterior spaces. Property owners often desire to enclose these spaces, particularly those that access service wings, to prevent the need to go outside when traveling between rooms. These transitional spaces are an essential element of a building's type. As a result, enclosing these spaces, particularly where visible from the street, is a radical alteration to a building and its visual perception from the public right-of-way.

**The HDLC does not permit enclosing of any porch, gallery or balcony that is visible from the public right-of-way.**



*This porch column is wood, while the base is a composite.*

## ALTERNATE MATERIALS

In locations that are highly susceptible to rot, such as column bases, or where the duplication of a material will be prohibitively expensive, such as cast iron, the HDLC will consider the use of alternate materials. To be approved by the HDLC, the proposed replacement material must match the appearance, size, profiles, texture and finish of the historic material being duplicated.

### Porch, Gallery and Balcony Review

***Dimensioned drawings of all proposed components including all details must be submitted and approved by the HDLC Staff prior to any installation or modification***

**Maintain, replace or install appropriate exterior wood trim and ornamental metals in-kind to match existing**

**S C N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Remove, install or replace exterior wood trim and ornament with non-wood material; replace ornamental metal with non-metal material**

**S**

Commission review.

**C N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Install inappropriate components or materials; Construct new porch, gallery or balcony**

**S**

Commission review.

**C N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Remove historic lighting**

**S C**

Commission review.

**N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Install new appropriate lighting, security camera or ceiling fan**

**S C N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Install new inappropriate lighting, security camera or ceiling fan**

**S C**

Commission appeal.

**N**

HDLC Staff review.

**Enclose porch, gallery or balcony**

**S C**

Commission appeal.

**N**

HDLC Staff review.

This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

© 2015, City of New Orleans, Louisiana

Prepared by Dominique M. Hawkins, AIA, LEED AP of Preservation Design Partnership, LLC in Philadelphia, PA.